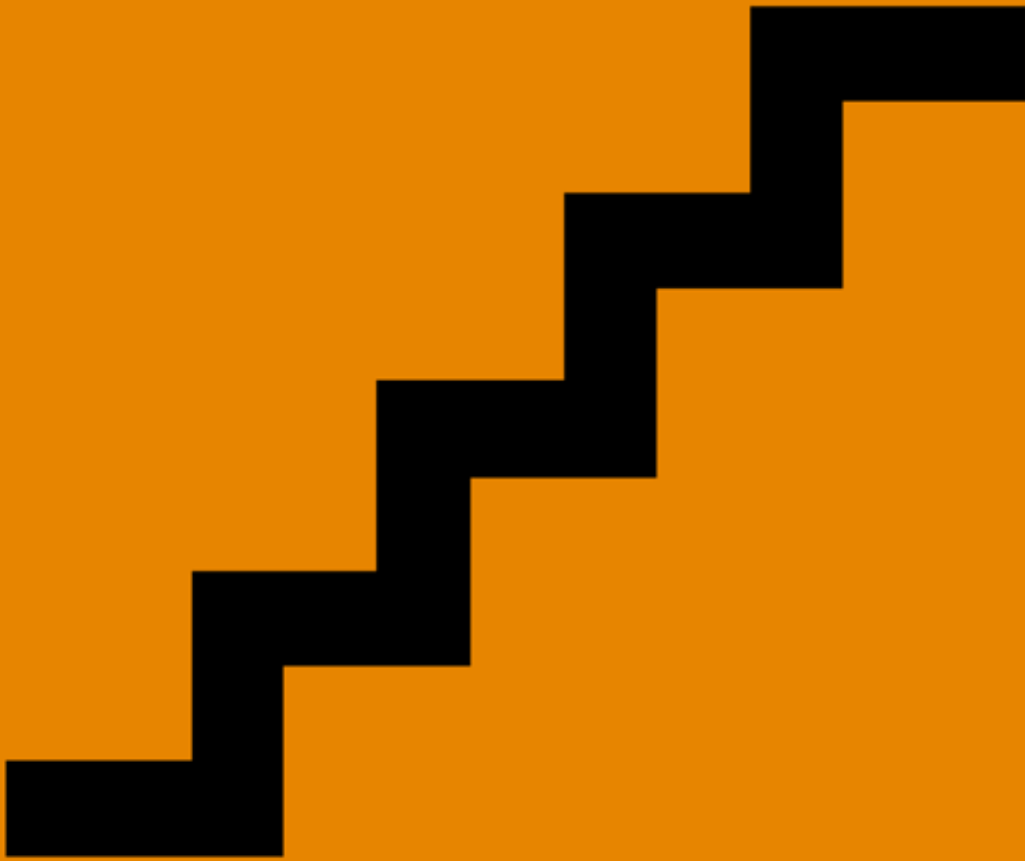




SAMPLE
BRIEF VERSION



CLIMBING THE LADDER

THROUGH MANAGING WORKPLACE
POLITICS & UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL
DIFFERENCES

MICHAEL | THONG

DISCLAIMER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael Thong

Clinical Psychologist / Organizational Behavior Analyst

MSc(ClinPsy), BBA(Econ &Psy), CPsychol(UK), MSPS(SG), CP L4(APACS), CCR, ACTA

Michael is a chartered psychologist and an organizational behavior analyst in private practice based in Singapore. He focuses on organizational behavior, counseling, training, organizational testing and diagnostics in Singapore. He had spent more than a decade analyzing and combating workplace politics. Michael is a Chartered Member with the British Psychological Society and holds the Chartered Psychologist title, he is a member with the Division of Clinical Psychology and Occupational Psychology with the British Psychological Society. Michael is a Full Member with Singapore Psychological Society, and a certified practitioner (level 4) with Association of Psychotherapists and Counsellors Singapore. Michael is also a Certified Crisis Responder with National Organization of Victim Assistance or NOVA (USA), and a WSQ certified trainer holding the Advanced Certificate in Training and Assessment (ACTA). Michael is also a Certified Coach / Consultant with C-VAT Psychometric International.

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CONTENT

PART 1: THE ILLUSION OF POLITICS FREE WORKPLACE

PART 2: INDIVIDUAL NEEDS, DIFFERENCES & MOTIVATION

PART 3: PROFILE OF TOXIC COLLEAGUES

PART 4: STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING WORKPLACE POLITICS

Tactics 1: Understanding and Managing Yourself

Tactics 2: Understanding and Managing Your Environment

PART 5: WRAPPING UP - SWOT ANALYSIS FOR SUCCESS

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

PART 1

THE ILLUSION OF POLITICS FREE WORKPLACE

Workplace politicking are not new behaviors that have only recently, existed in organizations. Early research on workplace politicking behavior can be dated back to the early 1980s where workplace politics research predominantly focused on perceived politicking behavior, organizational processes, and attitudes (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Cavanagh & Moberg, 1981). In the early days, workplace politics were still politely referred to as issues arising from work processes, employee's attitude, belief system, and personal perception of what workplace politics are (Farrell & Petersen, 1982; Cheng, 1983). In fact, there have been arguments about the ethics of workplace politicking behavior (Zahra, 1985). This means that there was a time where workplace politics are still considered borderline unethical, and people within the workplace debate about the effects and consequence of workplace politics to the overall organizational processes and dynamics.

1.1 Definition of Workplace Politics

Organizational political behavior have sparked many interest in the last decade as a field that is fast becoming more and more relevant within the workplace and the industries (Vigoda E. , 2002). Many past research have examined the various aspect of workplace politics behavior; however, due to the dynamic and elusiveness of organizational political behavior, it is often difficult to pin-point specific variables as well as factors that influence its applications (Witt, Andrews, & Kacmar, 2000).

A good definition for workplace politics would be: strategies that people use to gain advantage for their personal agenda or to garner support for a cause that

they strongly believe in (MindTools, 2016). The term ‘workplace politics’ usually comes with negative connotation that implies a toxic workplace filled with strives and conflict; referring to strategies or stratagems that people utilize to seek personal profit at the expense of others.

1.2 Workplace Politics – The Inevitable Reality

Workplace politics are inevitable, and below are some reasons that may have contributed to the inevitability of workplace politics (the list is not exhaustive) (Latif, Abideen, & Nazar, 2011; Zaleznik, 1970; Stanley, 1981):

1. **Power distributions are unequal.** Certain people within the system have more power than others; either because of hierarchical organizational structure or other basis of influence.
2. **People have selfish agendas.** For many people, self-interest is of utmost priority. For example, promotion, pay increment are common agendas that individuals hold on to as they engage themselves in political stratagems.
3. **Competitiveness.** When people seek out their personal agendas, competition starts, and it causes misalignment among team members and individuals within the organizational eco-system.
4. **Conflict in goals.** When there are individuals who are passionate about their goals and wants to ensure that decisions are made according to their desired outcomes, politicking usually happens. These individuals often compete with each other for the purpose of ensuring their personal goals are achieved.
5. **Limited resources.** This build upon the ‘competitiveness’ factor as teams and departments or even individuals may be required to compete with each other for the limited resources within the organization.

6. Diversity. In an organization, individuals from diverse backgrounds, different educational qualifications, different life experiences, as well as individuals with varied interest come together and work together. They are often required to work with each other to achieve common organizational goals. However, under such arrangements, people may also form cliques, and have difficulty interacting with each other. As a result, conflict and politicking behavior may arise.

1.3 Evolution of Workplace Politics

Fast forward to the 21st century, where people had ‘micro-evolved’ their personalities, lifestyle, and value system into one that is extremely competitive, fast-paced, and highly aggressive; this is especially true for the current Singapore culture where there is a significant emphasis on meritocracy, self-centeredness, elitism, competition, and ‘kiasu-ism’(SingaporeBusinessReview, 2012; Chia, 2016). The reality of today’s society is that workplace politics are no longer an option (Reardon, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). Polling a general group of people would yield the result that many people would prefer to not be involved in workplace politics(Reardon, 2015); however, the reality is that everyone within any workplace are often involved in workplace politics(Vigoda E. , 2000; Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003). Workplace place politics have become a necessity for everyone within the workforce who wishes to survive and thrive in any organization globally.

1.4 Consequence of Workplace Politics

Consequences of workplace politics are usually undesirable, toxic, and it affects people working within the organization greatly(Pfeffer, 1978; Marques J. , 2009). However, there are instances where politicking could be used

constructively to achieve universal goals, and to difficult problems. The consequences of workplace politicking behavior are dependent on the user/practitioner of the politicking behavior.

Examples of negative consequences of workplace politics can be (Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar, & Howard, 1996):

1. Tarnishing reputation of colleagues. Individuals who engage in aggressive workplace politicking behavior may intend to harm or discredit their colleague's reputation for competitive purposes (Ferris, Zinkob, Brouerc, Buckleyd, & Harveye, 2007; Gandz & Murray, 1980).
2. There are arguments that workplace politics usually result in long term losses for the organization in terms of productivity as well as financials.
3. Disrupting work. When unnecessary politicking behavior occurs, it disrupts work processes, concentration, and prevents employees from focusing on their work.
4. Effects relationships at work and outside of work. Friends may become enemies with each other because of work politics. Helping behavior may also be less likely to happen in a political organizational climate (Froman, 1962; Gamson, 1968).
5. Increase conflict and tension are common traits in an organization with high political climate. This may result in increased levels of toxicity and frustration in employees.
6. High criticism. Critical attitude towards work and fellow colleague increases as a result of work politics. Excessive criticism limits creativity, ideas, and growth of the organization.

7. Negativity and toxic vibe comes as a given in an organization that is high on workplace politics(Butler, Hickson, Wilson, & Axelson, 1977-78; Harris, James, & Boonthanom, 2005).
8. High turnover rate(Spencer & Steers, 1980). When companies are excessively political, starts to impact employees negatively (i.e. health, stress levels, mental status, etc), people leave the company. High turnover rate, incurs increased training and recruitment cost for the company.

1.5 Why Do People Play Politics?

If workplace politics is so detrimental to the organization and the people within the organization, why are people engaging in it so frequently? Common question for the perplexed; however, there are no direct answer to this question. Understanding why people engage in political behavior would require an in-depth examination of all areas of life, circumstances, motivation, psychology, and individual differences that may have encouraged the person's actions as well as preference towards political behavior.

Political behavior can be considered as both harmful and opportunistic (Marques J. , 2009). Accordingly to Joan Marques, while gossip behavior is generally harmless among members of organization, this behavior becomes dangerous when there is intent to gain certain advantages through act of gossiping. Nevertheless, there are proponents of workplace politics that believe that workplace politicking behavior is actually useful for creating opportunities(Vigoda-Godat, Vinarski-Peretz, & Ben-Zion, 2003). Generally, an individual's desire to participate in workplace politics reflects their personal value system as well as perception of how their reality should be like; an individual who

strongly believes that it is ok to ‘play politics’ and sacrifice others in order for them to achieve their personal gain, would undertake their politicking actions and justify them using their own sets of value system. Others, who do not believe in sacrificing others for their personal gain, would probably attempt to shun workplace politics completely – but they will be sorely disappointed.

Reasons why people would engage in politicking behavior can be summarized into two main types of reasons: (1) behavioral reasons, and (2) psychological reasons (Boyle, 1985; Simon, 1990; Street, Hague, & Savigny, 2008). Behavioral reasons are generally superficial reasons that could be observed by everyone. Examples of behavior reasons include but not limited to the following:

1. Desire to be in the limelight easily without having to put in much effort, contribution, and hard-work.
2. Desire to achieve success or agenda that extend beyond the employee’s current authority or within a short time span.
3. Inadequate supervision or management of staff behavior at workplace.
4. When employees have excess time, they tend to gossip excessively.
Excessive gossip behavior will also lead to workplace politicking.
5. Arrogant and prideful supervisors or managers.
6. Colleagues who are easily jealous, envious, bitter, and resentful.

Psychological reasons that motivates an individual to engage in workplace politicking may include but not limited to the following:

1. In any organization, working with people require every individuals to find compromise between what they want for themselves and what others

want. This is a tricky situation as at times, meeting needs of one-self and others can be a zero-sum game.

2. People are emotional beings with conscious or unconscious insecurities. When these insecurities are exposed, vulnerable feelings will instigate defensive behavior (i.e. politicking, etc) as ways to protect their own insecurities.
3. A variety of other psychological/motivational factors that will be discussed in part 2 of this eBook.

The resulting behaviors are often undesirable behaviors of office politicking where it disrupts critical organizational processes, complicates simple tasks – making them complex and often unsolvable, reduces organizational effectiveness, and drains people in the organization emotionally and possibly, physically.

Psychologist Robert Hogan, through years of research, observed that common dynamics that govern workforce politics and dynamics can be surmised by three main basic evolutionary needs of humans (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994):

- 1. The need to get along.** This promotes cooperation amongst groups of organisms and makes up the concept of ‘group living’. It reinforces the idea of bonding and affiliation in specific context.
- 2. The need to get ahead.** This can be characterized through ‘power struggle’ than exists within groups of organisms or people. Depending on the characteristics and personality traits of the individuals within the group, there will be some who are willing to take charge and predisposed to leadership responsibilities. This will usually happen until another individual who may also be high on leadership trait, intend to challenge the current

leader for the right to lead the pack. This usually results in internal competition, friction and conflict. The conflict and tension will be further fueled by the desire of some members of the group to be loved and accepted by the leader; thus, contributing to favoritism, conflict, and other negative politicking behavior.

3. **The need to find meaning.** Every individuals desire to find meaning to their existence. During the quest of finding meaning for their own existence, the individual would be exposed to insecurities, competition, and other factors that may threaten to compromise their quest for a meaningful existence. These threats may be met with resistance by the individuals.

1.6 Survival Skills

Developing political competence is not a choice; it is a requirement for everyone in the workforce (Vigoda E. , 2000; Reardon, 2015; Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). All organizations locally and internationally are political; in fact, to a great extent, it is likely that these organizations will continue to be political. Being able to manage workplace politics well will reward the participant; however, should there be mismanagement of workplace politics, the consequences are never desirable. Those who are able to leverage on the political climate of the organization and get into the ‘inner circle’ would be at great advantage (Cheng, 1983). Often the advantage comes in the form of workplace benefits such as (1) able to get more things done, (2) more recognition for effort contributed, (3) acknowledgement of competence and ability, (4) promotion, (5) financial gain, as well as (6) useful and beneficial interpersonal relationships. Basically, the advantages of workplace politics are limited only by the culture of which the politics exists.

Failure to be familiar and understand the political landscape would result in the reverse of the advantages that would otherwise be extended to you (Cheng, 1983; Liu, Liu, & Wu, 2010; Jiang, Lepak, & Baer, 2012). There will be questions on your competence as an employee as well. Questions about your leadership skills, problem solving, get work done, and garner respect would be tagged to your ability to handle, manage, and play work politics in your day to day work (Thite, Budhwar, & Wilkinson, 2014).

Therefore, developing the ability and skills to recognize and manage workplace politics effectively would be critical for everyone's career development. However, it is important to note that not everyone can be skilled expert in managing workplace politics. As such, it is important to understand how politicking behavior works to prevent from being victimized.

PART 2

INDIVIDUAL NEEDS, DIFFERENCES & MOTIVATION

Individual needs, differences, and motivation must not be misunderstood as a factor that causes workplace politicking behavior. Individual needs, differences, and motivation refers to the differences that every individual perceives as their needs, personality, as well as motivational factors (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Funder, 2004; Froman, 1962). It is not the differences of every individual within the workforce that causes the conflict; it is in fact, the conflict that arises due to the differing methods of which every individual within the organization use/exploit in order to achieve their personal objectives and agendas.

In every organization, people (employees) vary in multi-faceted domains such as personality, social behavior, work style, experience, background, and; most imperatively in today's multicultural society where corporations now transcend national boundaries and its employees come from different nationalities -culture (Waddock & Smith, 2000). One of the reasons as to why office politics exists is because each employee has his or her own agenda or interest at work. It may be due to the need for power (McClelland, The two faces of power, 1970), influence (Cherrington, 1989), recognition (Maslow, 1954), rewards or getting things done in their favor (Atkinson, 1964). Individuals have different personal, social and organizational needs. This chapter will discuss three need theories which highlight the motivation for office politics in an organization.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a prominent human motivation model, what drives people to do what they do can be characterized into the 7 basic needs (an extension from the original 5; with some arguing that there should be an eighth component). We will discuss the detail of Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of

Needs in Part 4 of this book. At the moment we will focus on the relevant instigator for people's behavior: (1) need for achievement, and (2) need for power.

2.1 Need for Achievement

While Maslow did not specify that any particular needs plays a more important role than others, McClelland (1965) identified a single need as being imperative compared to the rest: the need for achievement. McClelland and his colleagues defined the need to achieve as behavior oriented toward competition with a standard of excellence (Atkinson, 1964; McClelland, 1965). According to them, our competitive and success-oriented society highly values and reinforces the need to achieve. For example, since young, children are taught by their parents, peers, and even the media to excel and be the best. The implications of the achievement motive for personal and organizational functioning are extensive: The need for achievement will logically have an impact on the type of job or career one desires, how hard one works, the level of job performance one attains, and even the actions one does to hold that job or career. Ideally, the need for achievement motive promotes performance-oriented activities and research has shown that it has (McClelland, 1962) but it may also foster negative politicking behaviors such as “stabbing” people in a group or individual’s quest for achievement. Nevertheless the need for achievement was associated with lower level workers while leaders were more involved with the need for power (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

2.2 Need for Power

Another specific need with implications for work motivation is the need for power. The need for power is defined as the need to control other people which includes maintain an leader-follower relationship, being able to influence and direct others (Cherrington, 1989), defeating an opponent or competitor, and

attaining a position of greater authority (Yukl, 1989). According to McClelland (1970), there are two facets to power: personal power (striving for power for its own sake) and social or institutional power (striving for power for the fulfillment of organizational goals). People with a high need for personal power generally work towards ego-satisfying objectives while those with a high need for institutional power facilitate organizational effectiveness. What is interesting is that the need for power, social power in particular, has been found to be a more critical managerial attribute than the need for achievement (McClelland & Burnham, 1976).

As organizational politics or office politics is essentially about manipulating power and authority to build relationships to get things done (Daud, Isa, Nor & Zainol, 2013), the competition for power serves as the strongest motivator for conflict and, therefore, office politics. In a study involving 130 government officers from the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia, results obtained found that when employees perceived negative office politics in which there was a strive for personal power rather than social power, it actually decreased employees' own need for power and also job motivation (Daud, Isa, Nor & Zainol, 2013). Another fascinating finding was that employees with higher academic qualifications were more sensitive to organizational politics.

PART 3

PROFILE OF TOXIC COLLEAGUES

Workplace politicking and conflicts arises from the different personalities found within the organization (Allen et al, 1979; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2004). Different personality types have various different styles of communicating, thinking, working, and achieving objectives (positively and negatively). In this part of the eBook, we will discuss briefly (in a light hearted fashion), the 6 different types of toxic personality within the organization as well as what motivates them. The classifications are derived through years of observing workplace political dynamics. However, please note that the list is not exhaustive, there are more than classified. The information is useful for 'self-protection'.

3.1 Type 1: The Professional Workplace Politician

This type of workplace politicians are professionals. They believe in "gossiping their way up the corporate ladder"; not only do they endorse political behavior as a way to gain favors, they also believe that they are right in doing so. Merit and hard work matters little to them, and they frequently visit the boss's office declaring their value and massaging the boss's ego. To the professional workplace politician, their work is like a game where he/she believes in winning the next promotion or the next important project. Generally, he/she may neglect the work that he/she is assigned. This will also cause problem for other staff members within the organization. The professional workplace politicians are also superb in stealing credit and blowing their own trumpets about their 'non-existent' skills and knowledge. Their typical 'modus-operandi' is to ask you to send your work for them to review, and they will email your work to the boss while 'CC'-ing you in the email to act like they did the work.

3.1.1 Intervention Method

When you are positioned against the 'professional workplace politician', there are a few methods that you can apply to protect yourself and hopefully get ahead with your career despite the threat:

1. You must first evaluate the type of boss that you have. Should you be working with a boss with a huge ego, you will find that you have an uphill battle against the 'professional workplace politician'. A boss with a huge ego will usually succumb to his/her boot-licking, ego stroking, and a** kissing. This is especially true when you are working within a 'clan' oriented organizational culture where majority of top management are family members, and ego stroking is the only way to get inside the 'clan'. If your boss is not someone who have high ego and needs constant ego stroking, he/she will be able to see through the professional workplace politician's ploy and you will have a fighting chance.

2. Use facts to combat the professional workplace politician. This battle position will require you to be vigilant in covering your 'behind' and maintain credible and solid documentation as well as accountability. Documentation is important as it serves as evidence against the workplace politicians tactics.

3. Send your work directly to the boss. Do not let the professional workplace politician steal your glory. Make sure that you guard your work well.

4. Brag! You should also brag a little about yourself, showing your competence, and also your strength. Do not let the workplace politician have all the spotlight.

3.2 Type 2: The Braggart

The name for this type of toxic employee is self-explanatory. As you might have guessed, the braggart likes to brag a lot about their own accomplishments. They also tend to be indecisive when it comes to major decision making; often opting for a neutral stance. While not as toxic and difficult to manage as the 'professional workplace politician', the braggart's ego can be a handful when applied inappropriately. Other potential problem of the braggart is that they have a tendency to push blame to others (safeguarding their own reputation). Their mood and temperament are heavily influenced by the outcome of the decisions that they make. If they make good decisions, then it is likely that their ego feels fed and you have good days, if they make bad decisions, it is likely that everyone around them will suffer. Braggarts also tend to hold on to an ostrich mentality that if he/she avoids the problem, the problem will go away.

3.2.1 Intervention Method

To deal with the braggart, you need 3 things:

1. **Join in massaging his/her ego.** The truth is the braggart have lesser substance than he/she presents it to be. Their bragging is often a sign of insecurity. If you join in with the massaging of his ego, he/she might actually forget that you can be a potential threat!

2. **Force the braggart to participate in decision making.** Being someone who probably cannot take on serious responsibility, the braggart will not be able to make decisions without worrying about tarnishing his/her reputation. Corner him/her to make a decision and brace for an emotional meltdown.

3. **Patience.** You will need lots of patience to withstand all the nonsense you will be thrown at.

3.3 Type 3: The Negative-nator

I am sure you have met one of these type of colleagues during your work tenure. These people thrive and live on negative energy emitted within the organization. They enjoy drama and are motivated through creating a 'crisis' situation over the work they have to accomplish. Often the task are simple and they do have plenty of time to accomplish it; however, through sheer negativity or procrastination, they are able to create a crisis situation out of nothing.

3.3.1 Intervention Method

While working with the negative-nator, always set an earlier dateline (only if his/her work effects yours). This is so that if he/she fails to meet datelines, the crisis do not roll over to you. If you are in any way of form not related to his/her work, you can simply ignore their existence.

3.4 Type 4: Gossip Monger a.k.a 'Bao Toh' King/Queen

Have you ever wondered how the heck did your boss or your colleagues know about the small, little mistakes that you make? Details about events or circumstances that you do not wish disclosed? Well, you know who the culprit is! It is the gossip monger a.k.a the bao toh king/queen! There are many people who loves to share joy and happiness of others, but the gossip monger specializes on only the negative news. They use all sort of negative news to instigate politics, to get ahead, to get favors, and to move up the ladder.

3.4.1 Intervention Method

To tackle the gossip monger, we need to employ several tactical maneuvers:

1. **Keep your mouth tightly and firmly shut.** We need to minimize the information that's being communicated to the gossip monger. Especially, personal information. You don't know how it will be twisted and turned to be used for the gossip monger's personal advantage.

2. **Never trust the gossip monger.** The only thing that you can trust the gossip monger with is her ability to spread rumors and information tirelessly.

3. **Exploit the gossip monger.** If you wish to launch a counter attack on the political front against other workplace politicians, you can always exploit the gossip mongers tendency to be a loud speaker. He/she will broadcast the latest news for all to hear.

3.5 Type 5: The Debt Collector

The debt collector keep tabs of all help and assistance he or she provides for your or to any of your colleagues. He/she also keep tabs of all the offenses made against him/her. And debt collector expects the debt to be repaid at some point. The irony is that despite keeping tabs of what is owed to them, they always never keep tabs of the debt they owe to others.

3.5.1 Intervention Method

The best way to deal with the debt collector is to understand that the debt that is owed to you will never be repaid, and to avoid the debt collector at all cost.

3.6 Type 6: The 'Tai-Chi' Master

The 'tai-chi' master specializes in one skill set - pushing work to others and claiming credit. Tai-chi master's modus operandi is quite predictable, they would

usually worry about what other people are doing at work, and constantly complain that he/she is the only one doing work in the company. They then proceed to assign tasks to others and claim credit for all completed work. The 'tai-chi' master creates the illusion that he/she is constantly busy with work while in actual reality he is probably one that does the least work in the company.

3.6.1 Intervention Method

Avoid the 'tai-chi' master at all cost, and try not to have anything to do with the 'tai-chi' master.

PART 4

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING WORKPLACE POLITICS

Workplace or organizational politics are complex, ubiquitous, and possesses the capacity to have a widespread influence to disrupt critical organizational processes, productivity, and profitability of an organization (Poon, 2003; Poon, 2004a; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, Placing perceptions of politics in the context of feedback environment, employee attitudes, and job performance, 2006). It is difficult to arrive at one specific ‘formula’ that can be used across all context and situation on how to effectively deal with office politics. The reason for this quandary is the complexity of human behavior, intention, and motivation. Attempting to effectively dissect and understand the anatomy of workplace politics requires a complete understanding of the internal and external variables that contributes to the occurrence of workplace politics (Daud, Mohd Isa, Wan Mohd Nor, & Zainol, 2013; Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009).

We will be discussing strategies that have been recommended by many previous researchers, organizational behavioral analysts, psychologist, military strategists, and experts in the areas of politics. In order to effectively manage workplace politics, we need to first understand the ‘principles’ and ‘factors’ influencing office politics. The office political arena is like a battle that requires a tactical strategic approach and great understanding of yourself as well as your opponent.

As Sun Tzu (1964) once puts it:

It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know

yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle. (Chapter 3)

4.1 Tactics 1: Understanding and Managing Yourself

Before we look at the external battle condition, it is important to first assess ourselves first (Sun-Tzu & Griffith, 1964). We need to understand and gain insights about ourselves in order for us to know our strengths and weaknesses. Personal traits can be a double edged sword; it can either help you to grow your career, or hinder your progression. From personal experiences and anecdotal information obtained while working with people with career struggles, I have classified eight common dimensions of personal traits for evaluation of your current status, and we will discuss them in eight different stages:

Personality and Temperament	Motivation and Needs	Leadership Predisposition	Cognitive Structure and Value System
Work Aptitude and Ability	Learning Capability	Socializing and Relational Style	Physical Appearance

Table 1.0 Eight Dimensions of Personal Traits

Let's be honest with ourselves, our behavior and how we are as a person will greatly influence our career progress and development. Ensuring that our personal traits will work for us, instead of against us, will be of significant importance on how we develop ourselves within the organization, despite the politics involved.

4.1.1 Step 1: Understanding Your Personality and Temperament

Personality and temperament are one of the core determinants of a person's ability to succeed in the workplace (Robert, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2005; Judge & Higgins, 1999; Barrick & Mount, 1991). Many previous researches have indicated

the validity and reliability of personality and temperament as an important variable for a person's career success.

Personality and temperament are two very different things; according to Funder (2004), personality can be defined as an individual's behavioral characteristics, thought patterns, and emotions, that are governed by psychological mechanism that may or may not be hidden from these manifestations.

Temperament on the other hand refers to relatively consistent intrinsic personal dispositions that govern the person's ability to express activity, reactivity, emotionality, and sociability (Goldsmith, et al., 1987). Temperament is strongly influenced by biological factors; temperament can be inherited from genes.

Personality

To understand yourself (personality and temperament), there are many psychological tools that you can use to help shed insight about who you are. These information are useful for self-discovery and for you to identify certain areas of yourself that can be used identify your strengths and weaknesses. Personality traits are best discovered using personality profiling tools. Below is a quick assessment of your personality trait for self -discovery.

Instruction:

Select only one from each of the four pairs indicated below.

Extrovert	----- -----	Introvert
iNtuition	----- -----	Sensing
Feeling	----- -----	Thinking
Judging	----- -----	Perceptive

Instruction:

Circle the one ‘quadruplets combination’ you obtained from the previous assessment of your personality from the sixteen below.

INTJ	ENTJ	ISTJ	ESTJ
INFJ	ENFJ	INTP	ENTP
INFP	ENFP	ISFP	ESFP
ISTP	ESTP	ISFJ	ESFJ

Table 2.0 Personality Type Indicator*

The type indicator would describe your personality trait. Your trait should allow you to assess how you are as an individual and how you relate to people.

*You may refer our interpretive personality guide in the appendix section of this eBook for more information regarding your personality trait.

Temperament

In terms of temperament, individuals who are neurotic was found to be highly susceptible to workplace politicking behavior (Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011; Hochwarter & Treadway, 2003; Cullen, Fan, & Liu, 2014). Either as the instigator or as the victim; incidentally, neurotics are often not aware of their own contribution into the workplace political climate, often perceiving themselves as the victim. Neurotics can be characterized as an individual who manifest high levels of anxiety, worry, guilt, envy, and sadness. Research has also indicated that they are generally more deviant from the norm, more susceptible to accident, and are more frequently absent from work (Costa & McCrae, 1987; Bolger & Schilling, 1991). However, the culprit of neuroticism is often cognitive concerns and distortions.

A short questionnaire can be used as a quick evaluation of the level of neuroticism of an individual:

Instruction:

In the table below, for each statement, mark how much you agree with on the scale 1-5, where 1=disagree, 2=slightly disagree, 3=neutral, 4=slightly agree and 5=agree, in the box to the left of it.

Statements	Response				
1. Get stressed out easily	1	2	3	4	5
2. Am relaxed most of the time	1	2	3	4	5
3. Worry about things	1	2	3	4	5
4. Seldom feel blue	1	2	3	4	5
5. Am easily disturbed	1	2	3	4	5
6. Get upset easily	1	2	3	4	5
7. Change my mood a lot	1	2	3	4	5
8. Have frequent mood swings	1	2	3	4	5
9. Get irritated easily	1	2	3	4	5
10. Often feel blue	1	2	3	4	5

Table 3 Neuroticism Scale (Adapted from 'Big-5' Personality Test)(McCrae & John, 1992)

Scoring:

Neuroticism = 38 - (1) ____ + (2) ____ - (3) ____ + (4) ____ - (5) ____ - (6) ____ - (7) ____ - (8) ____ - (9) ____ - (10) ____ = ____ (Total Score)

The score should be between **0 to 40**. Scores closer to '**0**' would indicate that neuroticism level is high, while scores closer to '**40**' would indicate lower levels of neuroticism and high level of emotional stability.

4.1.2 Step 2: Understanding Your Motivation and Needs

Motivation and needs of an individual varies from person to person. It is difficult to classify everyone into a boxed up profile of what motivates them to work or what drives them to stay alive. However, understanding what motivates a person as well as what are their needs, will allow us to understand why a person does what he/she does and to predict their likely course of action in specific circumstances.

Motivation

There are many different definitions for motivation. Oxford Dictionary (2016) defined motivation as ‘desire and willingness to perform an act, behavior or a task’. By understanding your personal motivation, you will be able to evaluate and predict what drives you and prompt you undertake the task that you do. In addition, you would be able to gain insights what reinforces your behavior as a whole. Knowing this will allow you to artificially ‘train’ yourself for success.

According to Frederick Herzberg (1974), attitudes of employees within the organization are influenced by their personal motivational factors as well as factors that sustain those motivational factors (hygiene factors). This theory proposed by Herzberg is called Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

MOTIVATION FACTORS	HYGIENE (SUSTAINING) FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement • Recognition • Work • Responsibility • Promotion • Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay and benefits • Company policy • Relationship with co-workers • Physical environment • Supervision • Status

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job security • Salary • Working conditions • Personal life
--	---

Table 4 Motivation-Hygiene Factor (Herzberg, 1974)

When motivating factors are in place, employees will feel high level of motivation, high level of satisfaction; thus, leading to an overall positive experience. When hygiene factors are in place, it prevents dissatisfaction. Low levels of dissatisfaction in jobs reduced the likelihood of an individual to participate in workplace politicking behavior (Faye & Long, 2014; Buchanan, 2008; Ferris & Hochwarter, 2011).

Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow conceptualized seven categories of basic needs that are common to everyone (Martin & Joomis, 2007). According to the model, people are motivated to do what they need to do in accordance to their unmet needs.

Problem with Unmet Needs

Humans are born to survive, according to the evolutionary theory, we have evolved to develop new capabilities in order to adapt and survive in our current environment. Similarly, when this concept is applied to organization, people within the organization (i.e. employees / employers) when their needs are not met, it is likely that they will begin to develop negative emotions or behavior that may potential disrupt or toxify the overall work environment. As such, it is important to know and understand what these needs are. The seven basic needs are:

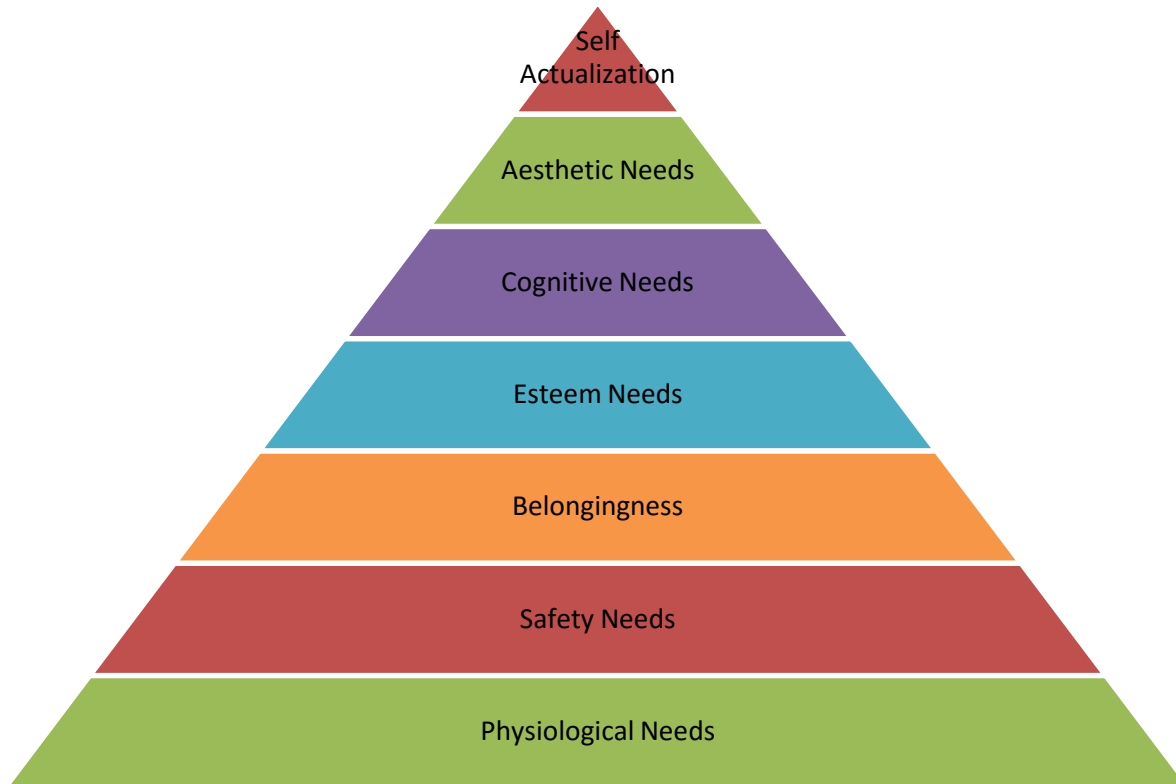


Figure 1.0 Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (Martin & Joomis, 2007)

Task:

1. Recall what you have just read about motivation and needs, and do a quick checklist about what motivates you most and what unmet needs do you currently struggle with (if any).
2. Reflect on the above information. This information should give you insights about how likely are you to be involved or able to manage the workplace politicking behavior.

4.1.3 Step 3: Understanding Your Natural Predisposition to Leadership

Natural predisposition to leadership refers to the natural inclination to be a leader and to hold on to leadership responsibilities. Not everyone is born to be a leader;

however, certain theorists argue that leadership skills can be acquired through training the selected individuals (Marques J. F., 2010; Conger, 2004). However, for this simple discussion of how natural predisposition to leadership will influence workplace political behavior, we will assume that leadership traits are born and not train or taught.

To put it simply, people can generally be profiled into two types of people: (1) leaders, and (2) supporters. Leaders (L) and supporters (S) exist collectively in all workplaces. Their collective existence is the problem. Leaders (L) tend to challenge other leaders for the right to lead; also otherwise known as the 'alpha-prime', the primal nature of dominance are usually quite visible in individuals with high in leadership predisposition. Supporters (S) on the other hand are more of an administrator, where they are concerned of executing tasks and supporting the leaders. With these two predisposed people types, it is likely that conflict will arise due to competition to lead or for personal agenda among the 'L' traits individuals, with the 'S' traits often complementing 'L' in their pursuits.

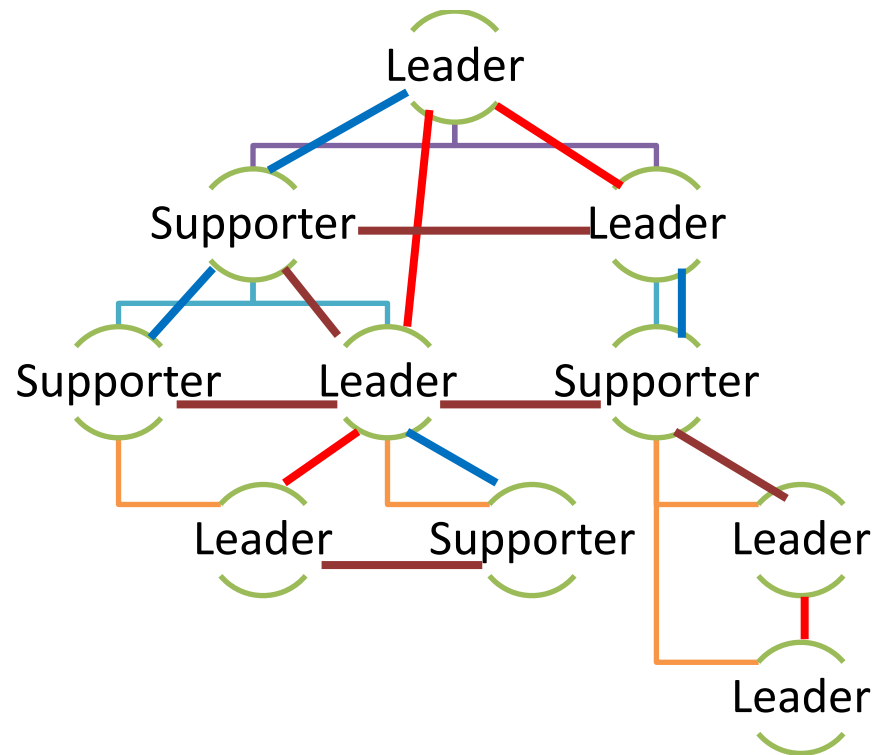
'L' vs. 'L' and 'L' Preference for Promoting 'S'

'L' traits could pick up other 'L' traits; thus, instigating the intense competition to lead; while 'S' would tend to be favored better by the 'L' traits as 'S' are considered less of a threat than 'L' would be. As such, if you are an 'S' trait, you are likely to be promoted to middle management under a strong 'L'; if you are an 'L', and your top management is also an 'L', it is likely that they will pick up your scent and will try to pick you off before you get to a place that may pose a threat to him/her.

The best way to survive in an organization where all the politicking might be directed to you (an 'L') is to fake being an 'S'. Unfortunately, no 'Ls' like

competition, and if you know you do not have resources to wage a ‘counter-attack’, it is better to not engage in the war.

A diagrammatic analysis of this theory as follows (Figure 2.0):



Conflict ——— No Conflict ——— Potential Conflict ———

Task:

1. Identify if you are an ‘L’ or an ‘S’.
2. If you are an ‘L’, reflect on ways that you can utilize to minimize the ‘threat’ that you may be unwittingly be exhibiting to other ‘Ls’ to minimize the politicking behavior until you are at an advantage.
3. If you are an ‘S’, congratulations! In time, you will be promoted as long as you are competent. However, you may find it difficult to lead your staff, and may have your authority challenged regularly by other ‘Ls’.

4.1.4 Step 4: Understanding Your Cognitive Structure and Value System

Your cognition (i.e. the way you think and how you think) as well as your personal value system (i.e. belief system, your sense of reality and what is right or wrong) determines your behavior, your emotions, the choices that you make, and how you relate to others. Psychiatrist Aaron T. Beck developed the cognitive behavioral model of psychological cognitive process that was intended to help with restructuring cognitive processes and ideologies that was determined to be detrimental to an individual's mental health (Butler, Chapman, Forman, & Beck, 2006; 1979; Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979). The cognitive model explains that behavior and emotions of an individual are usually governed by their thoughts and cognitive ideologies. How perceive a reality or interpret events will influence how we feel and behave as a person. This can serve as reinforcement to our perceptions or ideals.

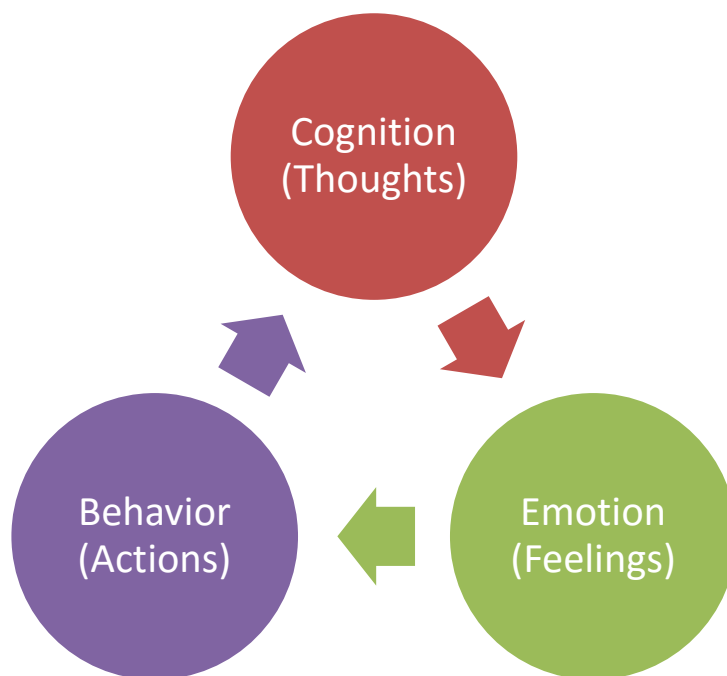


Figure 3.0 Cognitive Behavioral Model(Beck, 1979).

4.1.4.1 Problems with Perception

Human perception is one of the biggest contributors to workplace politics (Bodla, Afza, & Danish, 2014; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). Generally workplace politics can be classified into major sub-categories: (1) intended, and (2) unintended. Unintended workplace politics can also be caused by inaccurate human perception.

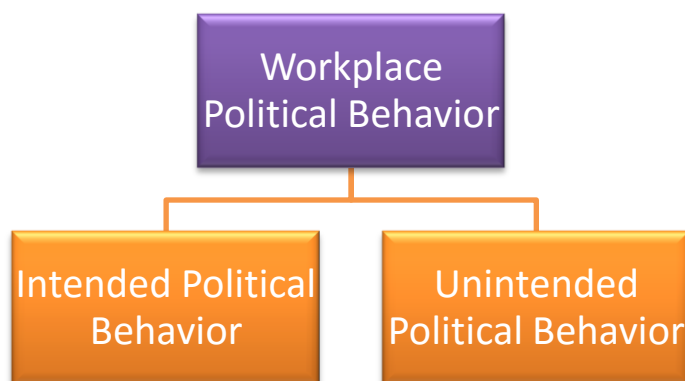


Figure 4.0 2 Types of Workplace Politics

Intended vs. Unintended

Most of the workplace political behavior we have discussed so far can be categorized as ‘intended political behavior’ where there is a deliberate intent to engage or initiate work politics for the purposes of achieving personal agenda. However, ‘unintended political behavior’ usually happens when unintentionally, through misunderstanding a certain action or behavior, an individual perceived a behavior to be ‘politically antagonizing’; he/she then follows up by retorting to the ‘politically antagonizing’ action through a series of politically offensive maneuvers, thereby starting the vicious cycle of office politics.

For example, imagine that you are filling up some water in the pantry’s water cooler. One of your fellow colleagues drops by the water fountain and has a

quick conversation with you about a movie he/she watches the night before. A third colleague happens to step into the pantry as well, and upon hearing the footstep, you and your 2nd colleague got distracted and stopped the conversation. Since the conversation content was trivial, both of you unconsciously decided to stop the conversation and exit the pantry; thus, leaving your 3rd colleague speculating and fuming that both you and your second colleague is gossiping about him/her. An unintended workplace politics have now been initiated.

4.1.4.2 Solution for Unintended Office Politics: Disengaging

During such an instance, your personal intuition would be best compass for shedding insights into the current vibe within the workplace. Misunderstanding is never fun; in fact, it is often tragic and pitiful. When you know that you have become the target of an unexpected office politics, you should only have one objective on how to solve this problem: disengaging.

Do not respond to any of the hostility than you face; in fact, choose to not respond at all! Until such a time when it is suitable for you to query the other party about the recent hostile and clarify if there have been a misunderstanding; responding to the hostile action in kindness or hostility, will only reinforce the other party's perception that you have engaged in an office political warfare with him/her. This will usually not end well.

4.1.4.3 Keeping Your Perception in Check

Making sure that your perception is healthy and sound is very important in ensuring that you do not expand your mental and emotional energy on unnecessary battle. As Sun Tzu (1964) have rightly warned that every individuals should pick their battles wisely. Having an accurate and healthy perception would allow you to evaluate your positions accurately, and not venture into meaningless battles.

The best way to do so is to ensure that you develop high level of thought-awareness of your thoughts (or as best as you could). In the beginning, this would likely be a tedious and mentally strenuous process; however, with consistent practice, this would usually result in a formidable way to raising self-awareness, and improve your cognitive tactical ability. To begin developing high level of thought-awareness, the cognitive behavioral model could be used. Below is a simplified version of antecedent-behavior-consequence (ABC) model.

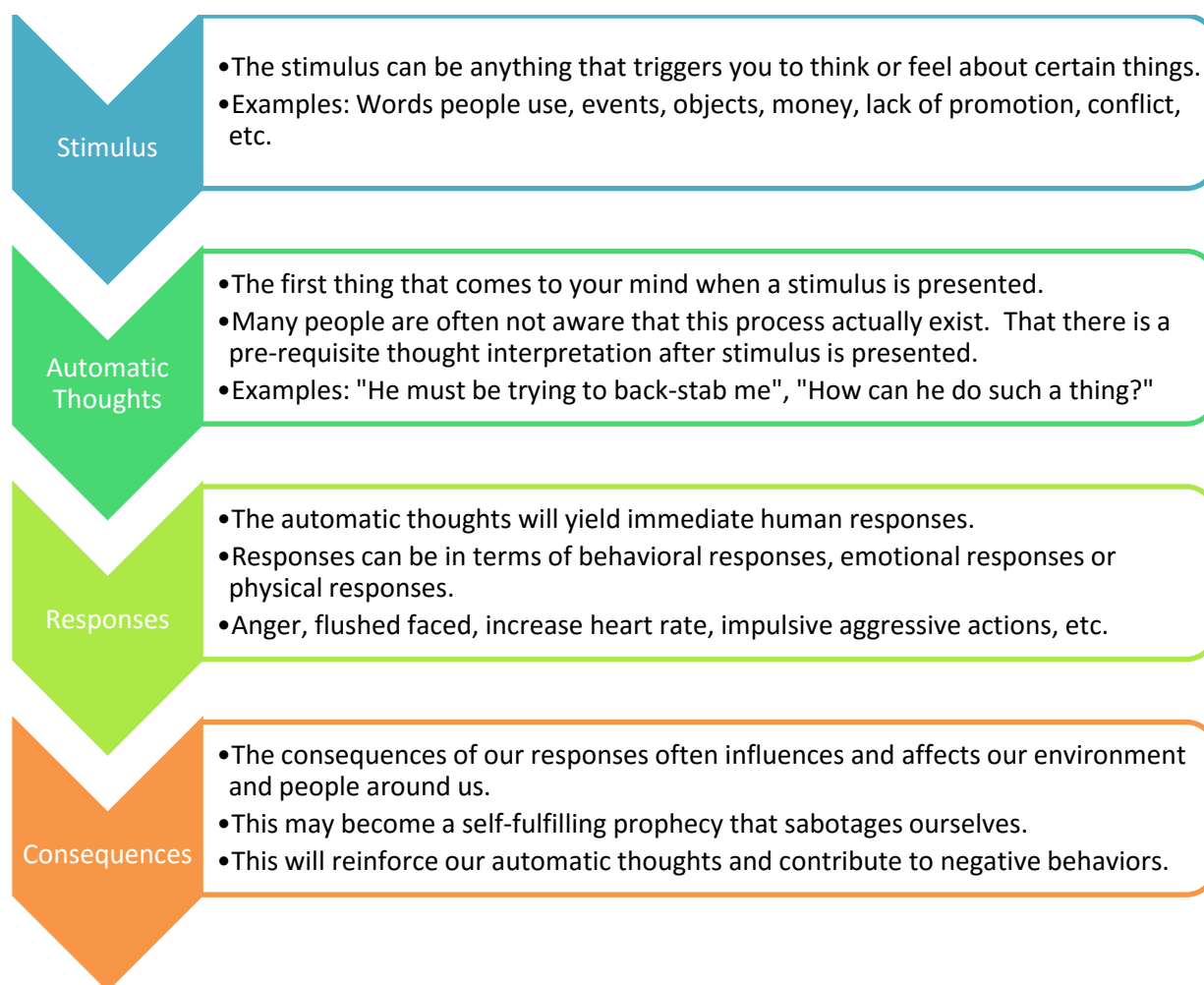


Figure 5.0 Simplified Antecedent – Behavior – Consequences(Beck, 1979)

4.1.5 Step 5: Understand Your Work Aptitude and Ability

Your work aptitude and ability will often predict if you are an easy target of workplace political victimization. The actual reality will be, the strong of the workplace political realm will often resort to criticism of work quality as a 1st level of offense before progressing to a more advance level. A competent ability and aptitude to produce consistently ‘acceptable’ to ‘good’ work quality will act as a front shield against attacks on you as a person. Of course, all of us know that it is difficult to maintain a consistently good work output; we are after all humans and not machines. This is why we need strategies on how we can maneuver in the tide.

If your work ability is generally high, than you have to ensure that you are not a victim of ‘hate’ politics that are often instigated by less competent colleagues who are often envious of your success. Ensure that you are demonstrating your competence at relevant times, and to keep a ‘low profile’ when necessary.

4.1.6 Step 6: Understanding Your Learning Capability

Your learning capability will determine how well you relate to your senior colleagues as well as your supervisors. No one likes a cocky newbie who is ignorant, incompetent, yet too arrogant and prideful too learn. A good self-check if you are humble enough to learn the skills required for the job and to accept positive criticism are critical qualities required to succeed amidst intense workforce political climate.

Reflect on your ‘teachability’ index as indicated below, and identify how you can better improve yourself according to the index below:

Not Teachable									Highly Teachable
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4.1.7 Step 7: Understanding Your Socializing and Relational Style

Your socializing and relational style would vary greatly with your personality and relational style. You should be able to gain some insights from the brief profiling tool from ‘Step 1’ of this brief guide. If you are an introvert, extravert, introverted extravert, or extraverted introverted, the way you socialize or relate to others will differ. To succeed in workplace politicking, unfortunately or fortunately, your methods of socializing matter. Below are some suggestions of which you can consider undertaking to do well in social situations:

1. Take initiative to start an intelligent conversation

Intelligent conversation is actually very simple to execute. Some of the ingredients that you need for intelligent conversation are: (1) to be logical and talk sense, (2) use proper words and minimize vulgarity, (3) know world topics by reading newspapers and being aware of world happenings, (4) talk clearly and confidently, and (5) practice! Small talks is not an easy task for many, but with practice, you can be competent, and this skill will come in handy.

2. Remember to smile during conversation

Remember to smile! Even if you are unhappy, this will help people feel more comfortable talking to you. When they feel comfortable, you allow rapport to be built; thus, giving you an edge in the relational and politicking warfare.

3. Maintain good eye contact

Maintaining good eye contact usually means that you are interested in the conversation. Avoid staring directly into the eye of the person who you are talking to as it indicates a confrontational approach; instead, focus on the bridge of their nose or the area between their eyes. If you lose interest or do not have any interest in the topic of the conversation, change the subject!

4. Practice active listening skills

Show that you are listening during the conversation by (1) being present during the conversation, (2) acknowledging the speaker through nodding, smiling, good posture, and appropriate facial expressions, as well as (3) deferring judgment and providing feedback if required. You can also paraphrase what you have heard back to the speaker – this action will also show that you are listening.

5. Do not rant / complain

Everyone have their own problems; do not complain about your problems excessively unless it is completely necessary. By not complaining you are also reducing the ammunition your colleagues have to use against you when it is tactically advantageous for them. When you complain, you have a tendency of exposing too much of yourself and be vulnerable. You may however, listen to your colleagues complain and be empathic. This will aid in you gaining their trust and for building better relationships.

6. Keep an open posture

To invite people to want to talk to you, you need to remain approachable and keep an open posture during conversation. Interested people will usually have an erect open posture or lean forward during conversation. A firm handshake also signifies an assertive stance; an open palm also indicates openness and willingness to listen. The reverse applies for closed postures. People are less likely to talk to you or want to build good rapport with you if you have a closed posture during communication. Examples of open and closed posture can be reflected as such:

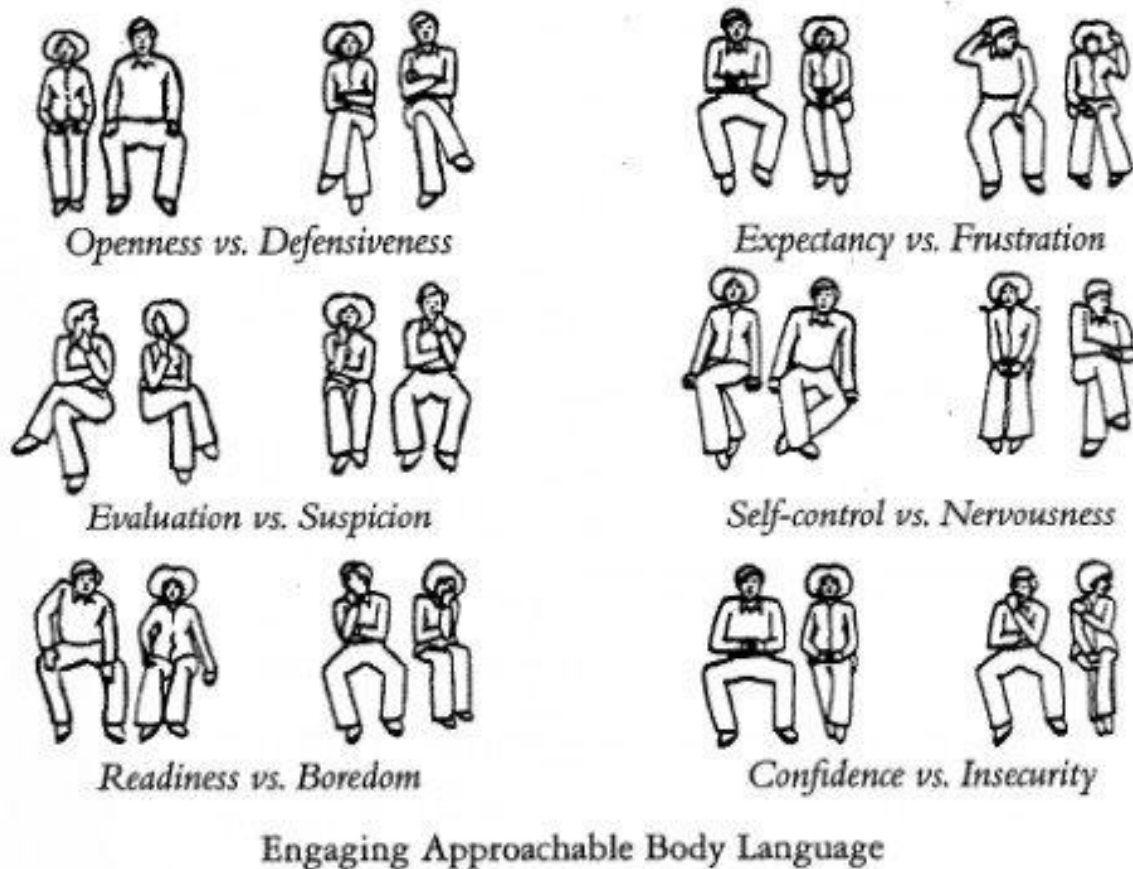


Figure 6.0 Open vs. Closed Posture (Flipper, 2013)

7. Dress appropriately

Appropriate dress code need to be observed. Depending on the context, you will probably need to dress appropriately. However, I believe that you will not have any problems with this.

4.1.8 Step 8: Knowing Your Physical Appearance

Incidentally, your appearance matters. Why? Because people are generally superficial and have preferences towards what they see as visually pleasing. Looking good or presentable will allow you to have an upper hand while managing

workplace politics. The subjective prejudices of human superficial way of making decisions are exploited should you look good. In fact, you will also find yourself able to build rapport with your supervisors as well as attain promotion much easier if you are well built, well groomed, and good looking. If you are not as well-endowed or born in a visual appealing manner, it is likely that you will need to work extra hard to demonstrate results through evidence, and hope to secure a supervisor that is objective and appreciate your talents.

4.2 Tactics 2: Understanding and Managing Environment

Now that you are familiar with who you are as an individual, it will be much easier to manage your external environment. As Sun Tzu (1964) rightly puts it, “Know yourself and you will win all battles”. In tactics 2, we will also apply Sun Tzu’s mantra “To know your enemy, you must become your enemy”, as well as “In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity”. Depending on your tactical capability as well as competence to maneuver strategically, you will be able to leverage on your environmental conditions to attain victory. Environmental influence can come from **TWO** main sources: (1) colleagues, as well as (2) organizational structure and culture.

4.2.1 Understanding and Managing Colleagues

Your colleagues are just like you and me, human beings who deserves respect. All of us are not void of needs and wants. To understand your colleagues, you will need to understand yourself. Using the same method in tactics 1, you can apply it to understand your colleagues. Understanding their needs, wants, and what motivates them as a person will allow you to gain insights into their behavior patterns, intentions, and how they make decisions. Putting yourself in their shoes

will allow you to see things from their perspective, giving you an edge while attempting to make strategic maneuvers.

4.2.2 Understanding and Managing Organizational Structure and Culture

Incidentally, this is the harder of the two external stimuli that you will need to manage effectively. Structure of an organization affects the culture of the organization significantly, and vice versa. However, people within the organization also serve as an extraneous variable in predicting the outcome of the two variables: (1) structure, and (2) organization. To manage the two variables, we will need to understand how the two variables actually work.

Organizational Structure

Countless research and theories have been done and proposed regarding organizational structure (Child, 1972; Jensen & Meckling, 1995; Armour & Teece, 1978). These theories of organizational structure are commonly discussed within an academic context, in classrooms; however, we are here to take a different approach to analyzing organizational structure. The purpose of analyzing the structure of an organization in this book is to understand how the structure propagates or contributes to people dynamics in the organization as well as workplace politicking behavior.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be differentiated into **FOUR** common types of organizational culture (Denison, 1990; Barney, 1986), and they are (1) clan culture, (2) adhocracy, (3) market, and (4) hierarchy. In Singapore, many companies are usually clan culture oriented or hierarchical oriented. Some are also family businesses where family members generally hold on top management position.

This creates a unique culture of workplace politicking where non-clan members try to please the family members in order to move up the ladder and gain advantages for their personal advantages.

3.2.2.1 Succeeding in Clan Based Organizational Culture

Clan based culture is probably one of the hardest to succeed in if you are someone who usually succeed due to personal merit. The reason is simple, in clan based structure, it is not what you know and what you can do that matters; instead, it is who you know that matters. In clan based culture, the person closest to the main decision maker (i.e. CEO, Owner, Partner, etc) has more power than a high ranking staff that do not have a close relationship with the main decision maker. Even if he/she is a lowly janitor or new staff, should he/she have good relationship with the boss, he/she has significant influence over decisions made within the company.

For example, the owner of the company has an assistant head who is pretty much his deputy whenever the owner is not around; however, the head is extremely close to a junior staff in the company whom he had personally brought into the company to help out. Between the junior staff and the assistant head, who do you think have more influence and power? Well, the answer is simply the junior staff. The junior staff ‘wins’ because of his/her relationship with the owner. However, this is mainly true only in clan based culture of company; where fairness and justice may be irrelevant.

To succeed here, you will need to get into the clan, if you are not able to get into the inside the ‘clan’, it best to consider alternative back up plan. Otherwise you may wasting valuable time and experience.

PART 5

WRAPPING UP - SWOT ANALYSIS FOR SUCCESS

Knowing the factors that influence workplace politics as well as elements that enhance politicking behavior you will still need to apply these knowledge effectively. The best way to start an effective application is to do a SWOT analysis. SWOT or otherwise known as Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats is a four factor, matrix style of analysis that is generally used by businesses to weigh their internal resources, internal weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and potential threats to the business. Now, it will be applied as an analysis method of your individual life and career path.



Figure 7.0 SWOT Matrix

TASK:

1. Think about your internal resources, your personal strengths and weaknesses. Write them down in a piece of paper.
2. Think about your external environment, potential opportunities for growth, and possible threats and hindrance to your growth and development. Write them down in a piece of paper.
3. Now, transfer your reflective thoughts into the matrix below, and formulate a strategic plan that is realistic enough to be applied, while at the same time taking into consideration the SWOT result of your analysis.

	HELPFUL (Useful for achieving objectives)	HARMFUL (Prevent objectives from being achieved)
INTERNAL FACTOR	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
EXTERNAL FACTOR	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS

Figure 8.0 SWOT Matrix for Self-Reflection

Wrapping Up

This is the end of our free eBook, hope you have enjoyed reading the materials and found the content helpful for your career development as well as day to day life.

This book is a brief version and is a preview for the full version of "Climbing the Ladder" which would be published in quarter 1 of 2017. The full version would have more details, and practical applications on how you can upgrade yourself from a career that you may possibly feel jaded about.

Stay tuned, and we look forward to meeting you in person!

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APPENDIX

<u>ISTJ</u> (Traditionalist) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutiful • Practical • Logical • Methodical 	<u>ISFJ</u> (Protectors) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutiful • Practical • Supportive • Meticulous 	<u>INFJ</u> (Guides) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devoted • Innovative • Idealistic • Compassion 	<u>INTJ</u> (Visionaries) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent • Innovative • Analytical • Purposeful
<u>ISTP</u> (Problem-Solvers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedient • Practical • Objective • Adaptable 	<u>ISFP</u> (Harmonizers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant • Realistic • Harmonious • Adaptable 	<u>INFP</u> (Humanists) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insightful • Innovative • Idealistic • Adaptable 	<u>INTP</u> (Conceptualizers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning • Innovative • Objective • Abstract
<u>ESTP</u> (Activists) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energetic • Practical • Pragmatic • Spontaneous 	<u>ESFP</u> (Fun-Lovers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous • Practical • Friendly • Harmonious 	<u>ENFP</u> (Enthusiasts) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimistic • Innovative • Compassion • Versatile 	<u>ENTP</u> (Entrepreneurs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk-taking • Innovative • Outgoing • Adaptable
<u>ESTJ</u> (Coordinators) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized • Practical • Logical • Outgoing 	<u>ESFJ</u> (Supporters) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • Practical • Loyal • Organized 	<u>ENFJ</u> (Developers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • Innovative • Supportive • Idealistic 	<u>ENTJ</u> (Reformers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determined • Innovative • Strategic • Outgoing

Table 3.0 16 Personality Typology (TheMyersBriggsFoundation, 2016)

CLIMBING THE LADDER

THROUGH MANAGING WORKPLACE
POLITICS & UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL
DIFFERENCES

MICHAEL | THONG



The
British
Psychological
Society

Chartered Psychologist